

SALT LAKE FIRE OFFICIALS TEAM UP TO TAKE AIM AT TARGET SHOOTING A LITTLE KNOWN CAUSE OF WILDFIRES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Salt Lake Field Office has spearheaded an interagency fire prevention campaign aimed at decreasing human-caused wildfires started by target shooting. So far, the SLFO has partnered with Utah County Fire Chiefs, Gun Shops and Statewide Hunter Expositions in an effort to heighten awareness to the fire hazards associated with target shooting in the West Desert.

2004 Wildfire statistics report that nearly ¼ of Salt Lake District's human-caused wildfires occurred when people were target shooting and sighting-in firearms. Target shooting fires are uncommon, but common denominators include concentrated and frequent target shooting combined with the fuel, topography, and weather conditions in these areas create the conditions necessary for this type of ignition and fire to spread quickly.

Many people enjoy going to the West Desert to target shoot. With dry grass, brush, and trees in abundance, it's very important to carefully choose places to enjoy yourself that are low hazard areas.

Here are some tips:

- Choose locations with little or no vegetation that can carry a wildfire.
- Choose your targets carefully. Shooting at rocks, at targets within rocky areas, or at metal objects can increase the chance of a spark.
- Be aware of the ammunition you are using. Tracer rounds are illegal to use in Utah. Full metal jacketed ammunition may increase the risk of a fire.
- As an extra measure of safety bring a shovel, extra water, and a fire extinguisher rated ABC (includes woody fuels) in your vehicle with you. These are good to have with you whenever you use public lands because wildfires can occur in other ways such as from vehicles, campfires, model rockets, and chainsaws, to name a few.
- Make sure you take your targets, shells and other trash with you when you go.

Recently, the Salt Lake Field Office Fire Education and Prevention staff was very excited to learn that work done locally might be picked up on a regional level. The Eastern Great Basin Prevention and Education Committee has expressed interest in adopting some of the programs initiated by the Salt Lake Field Office. The "sighting-in" campaign looks to be sighting out.